



NEWS

Newsletter of the
Zilker
Neighborhood
Association

FEBRUARY 2011

Austin, Texas
Established 1981

Saving the Heart of the Neighborhood A Message from ZNA President Andrew Elder

WHAT MAKES A COMMUNITY? When I moved to Zilker in 2002, I honestly didn't think much about that question. Zilker was near to my work, close to downtown, next to the park, (somewhat) affordable, and that was enough. Other than meeting my neighbors, I went about my daily life with little attention to the larger issues percolating around the area.

Before long, my girlfriend and I were married at the Umlauf Sculpture Garden. As our house grew into a home, we also began paying more attention to developments going on around Zilker. The pace of change—sometimes exciting, sometimes frustrating—seemed poised to redefine the neighborhood just as we were beginning to appreciate its quiet and quirky charms.

We attended our first Zilker Neighborhood Association meeting to learn more about upcoming issues, and ended up volunteering to be secretary and treasurer for ZNA. My wife and I came to know a new group of people with a broader perspective of Zilker, its history, its character, and its functions. For the first time, I began to see Zilker as a community of people with common interests rather than just a place, as George Carlin once observed, "for my stuff."
(Continued on page 6)

ZNA Meeting

February 28

Monday 6:30-8:45 PM

Zilker Elementary School
1900 Bluebonnet



Meet and Greet Social
Save Austin Schools
School Budget Action
New Development Updates



Newcomers, old-timers,
homeowners, renters,
business neighbors

All Welcome



If you love Zilker,
show it by voting.

Voter registration
deadline for the
next Austin City Council election
is April 14, 2011. If you are new
to the neighborhood, don't
forget to register.

The Austin Neighborhoods
Council candidate forum (the
best city forum around) will be
March 23. Don't miss it.

Vote like you mean it.

The Zilker Kid Count

THE SAVE ZILKER Elementary Coalition is conducting a census of children in the Zilker attendance area who are younger than kindergarten age. We hope to use the data gathered to refute the assertion by AISD's consultants that we have a shrinking population of families with children in our area. The census is about 90% complete, and we could use your help to get to 100%. The streets listed here still need to be canvassed. We could especially use help from people living in apartment and condominium complexes. If you can spend a few hours one day on this, please contact brian@shendauer.com for more information. Here are the streets that need to be counted:

Ariole Way, 2500 block of Bluebonnet, Del Curto, Delcrest Dr, Frazier Ave, 1100 block of Garner, 600-900 blocks of Kinney Ave, 2900-3000 blocks of Kinney Ave, 1300-1499 blocks of

Oxford, and 2300 block of Rundell.

Multifamily complexes where we need help:
 Barton Springs Apartments on Toomey, Barton Place
 behind Austin Java, The Cole at 300 South Lamar
 and, across the street, Bridges on the Park, Walden
 Park Apartments on Lamar south of Office Depot.

Brian Lindauer

The Facts about Zilker School

THE ZILKER CENSUS led by Brian Lindauer is necessary because AISD has consistently underestimated the school population for central Austin neighborhoods. Zilker is also in the middle of a baby boom (for example, seven preschoolers have appeared within one block of the newsletter editor's house since the 2010 Census concluded). The following excerpts from the Zilker PTA letter to the AISD Facilities Master Planning Task Force in January note important facts about Zilker School that all ZNA residents and voters should know:

"Our analysis of the task force's demographic projections raises numerous questions about the accuracy and merit of the data used to recommend closure of Zilker Elementary. For example, we believe the projection for 2014 is based on incomplete, out-of-date, flawed data. Based on enrollment data for Zilker neighborhood children over the last six years, K-2 has experienced a 27% average increase over older grades 3-5. This trend of increased neighborhood enrollment will continue.

"The Zilker neighborhood is located in the heart of Austin's urban core. Because of (Continued on page 4)

LITTLE ZILKER PARK

presents

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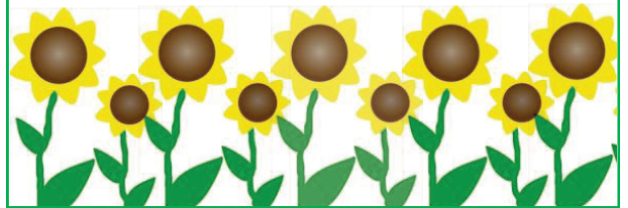
SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2011

9 A.M. TIL NOON

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WELCOME AUSTIN PETS ALIVE!

Neighbor Gretchen Meyer reports that Austin Pets Alive! is planning some outdoor public space at its new adoption center at 2807 Manchaca (just off South Lamar). Watch for more info in March on the Zilker Yahoo group or AustinPetsAlive.org on the Web.



Climate Controlled Play Areas

Southpaws Playschool
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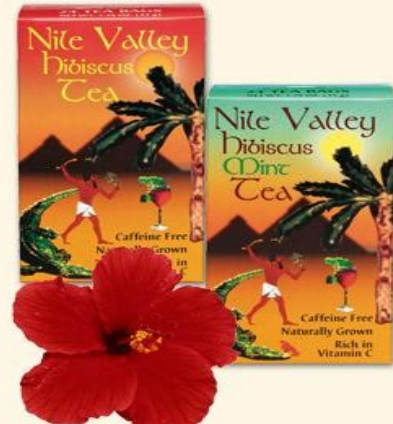
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Friends of Little Zilker Neighborhood Park

PLEASE HELP OUR TREES in Little Zilker Park and the Zilker School Campus for It's My Park Day, Saturday, March 5, from 9 to noon. The Friends of Little Zilker Neighborhood Park need 18 volunteers to continue the mulching started last year. Bring wheelbarrows, hard rakes, pitchforks, and shovels if possible. Some tools will be provided. As always, local businesses provide excellent refreshments.

We are also working with the city parks department to care for the playing field, which suffered greatly in last summer's drought. To revitalize the grass without significant disturbance, the staff at Natural Gardener has recommended that the field be aerated, overseeded with bermuda, and treated with Terra Tonic. The aeration (which the parks staff is scheduling) can be done before or after the park workday, but it needs to be done shortly after a rain.

This work will require broadcast spreaders, hose end sprayers, and lots of hoses and connections. If you would like to work on or donate to these or any other projects in Little Zilker Park, contact littlezilker@gmail.com, and don't forget to sign up for It's My Park Day through the Austin Parks Foundation.

Gardner Sumner and Gina Diehl

To volunteer for upcoming workdays or other park projects, contact littlezilker@gmail.com. **Join the Friends of Little Zilker Neighborhood Park** through the Yahoo group for FLZP@yahoogroups.com, or for more info, visit the ZNA Web site at zilkerneighborhood.org.






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Zilker Neighborhood Watch Report

THANK YOU to all the Save Zilker School volunteers! It's inspiring to see such home-grown activism. The Zilker Neighborhood Watch Team reminds everyone that there's another way to get involved. We're working to integrate Neighborhood Watch activities into our community. If you are concerned about crime and want to help keep Zilker safe, we'd love to hear from you.

As the weather warms up, we can turn our walks and bike rides into neighborhood patrols. Contact Robert Walls for a Zilker Watch t-shirt, on sale now for \$5. If you see anything suspicious, call 911. Stay in touch with the Zilker Yahoo group at groups.Yahoo.com/group/Zilker.

To learn what you can do at home and with your neighbors, contact one of these team members.



Z Neighborhood Watch Team

Laura "Ole" Olesen, 663-5776,
ole@oleaustin.com

Robert Walls (Patrols), 922-5051,
robosouth@yahoo.com

Connie Temple, 592-8039,
connie.temple@gmail.com

(Continued from page 2) our status as a flagship elementary school, we are attracting more and more young families to the neighborhood each year. Construction trends are responding to the demand and, in just the last four years, 107 new family-sized homes have been built and sold in our neighborhood. Much more development is projected that will increase the number of children in the attendance zone.

"Projected Repair/Renovation Costs

"One of the reasons cited to justify Zilker's potential closure is the high Facility Condition Index (FCI) assigned to our school (55). It is our understanding that the task force ranked repair items on a scale of one (highest priority) through five (lowest priority). According to our analysis, Zilker only has \$800,000 in high priority items, which is in the same range as neighboring schools. In contrast, Zilker has \$4.6 million in non-priority items. Although we recognize that Zilker is an older, historical campus that needs several improvements, overall the school is in good condition. In fact, more than \$1.3 million in bond money has been allocated to the Zilker campus since 2002 to improve the physical plant, including new bathrooms, HVAC, roofing and new classroom technology. According to our analysis, Zilker is no more expensive to renovate and no more cost-effective to close than many other schools.

"Campus Enrollment Issues

"As in past district facility assessments, a primary deciding factor for campus closures is

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the percentage a campus is under- or over-enrolled. We . . . would all likely agree that an enrollment of over 100% represents a healthy, thriving campus and a supportive community. Zilker Elementary is currently at 114% enrollment capacity with 536 students enrolled.

"Finally, we have learned that, despite the school's large campus, some task force members are of the opinion that Zilker is subject to strict environmental regulations preventing future expansion. We have researched this issue and have found that the Zilker campus is not subject to the SOS ordinance, but is rather subject to the Town Lake Watershed Ordinance, which allows 40% impervious cover."

All our South Central elementary schools have been struggling with the same flawed data for years. The supporters of Becker summed it up this way, in their own letter to the task force: "The vision of AISD to implement Dual Language at Becker has achieved the intended result: enrollment has increased to the extent that our campus is projected to fill to capacity by 2014. . . . Additionally, with modest and sensible revisions to attendance boundaries for the six South-Central Elementary Schools, all six schools could be at or near 100% capacity by 2014, avoiding millions of dollars in increased capital costs to build new schools in the area."

Local businesses and politicians have also questioned the economic wisdom of school closings. Zilker's state representative Elliott Naishtat wrote in January, "I am extremely concerned about the impact of this decision on Austin's economic recovery. Schools are a vital part of corporate location and start-up entrepreneurial decisions, as well as a vital source of customers to the many
 (Continued on page 8)

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(Continued from page 1)

I used to think that change was something that just happened. I had never considered that it took effort to put a sidewalk along Kinney. It never occurred to me that somebody was fighting for the walkable streets, the urban forest, and the diverse and affordable housing that I took for granted. In my six years with ZNA, I have come to appreciate that things never simply happen. It requires dedicated and thoughtful people to shape change. ZNA does not always succeed, and its actions can be controversial, but I have seen firsthand that ZNA matters.

In donating thousands of dollars and countless hours to families in need, ZNA matters (see page 8). In obtaining tens of thousands of dollars to rejuvenate Little Zilker Park, ZNA matters (see page 3). In demanding fair community benefits in exchange for zoning windfalls, in working with organizers to smooth ACL traffic and improve safety, in defending our public parkland and waterfront, in negotiating reasonable and workable sound agreements, in protecting heritage trees and plant-

ing dozens of new ones, ZNA matters.

And there has never been a more important time for ZNA to matter. As most of you are aware, the state budget crisis has led us to the point where Zilker Elementary School is threatened with closure, along with more than a dozen other schools around the city. Just as my oldest daughter is thriving in her first year at Zilker, the pace of change again seems poised to redefine our neighborhood.

It would be easy to shrug our shoulders and accept that hard times lead to hard choices, that closing Zilker School is another one of those changes that just happens. Certainly the fiscal crisis is real, but it turns out that the justification for shuttering Zilker School is more fiction than fact. We cannot allow a flawed process, driven by flawed data, to rip the heart out of our neighborhood.

The PTA has taken a strong lead on debunking errors and working constructively at all levels to make the case for our school (see page 2). Businesses have spoken out in support of the school and donated space and resources to help make our voices heard. ZNA is weighing in too, advocating that any hope for a vibrant central city—sustainable neighborhoods, dense transit corridors, future tax revenue—rests squarely on retaining exemplary local schools like Zilker. We invite the entire community to the February 28 ZNA meeting to help us draft a position statement to guide us through the critical next few months.

Once again, I have come to know a new group of people energized by a common cause. The abundance of insight, passion, diversity, and fortitude in our neighborhood provides me with daily inspiration, and I consider myself fortunate to be part of this effort. This experience has broadened and fundamentally changed my perception of community, such that Zilker neighborhood issues and school issues will now be inextricably intertwined. As Elliott Naishtat, our state representative, put it, "Schools are more than buildings. Schools are the hearts of neighborhoods."

We have made progress toward saving our school and helping AISD deal responsibly with this crisis, but our gains will hold only if people outside the school community embrace this cause, join with us today, and continue to support the school in the future. Past parents, future parents, taxpayers, businesses—we all have a stake in keeping

For more info:

The Web site

SaveAustinSchools.com

is your best source for the latest news and background on the AISD budget process.

It includes the alternative budget proposals submitted by

facilities task force members

Susan Moffat and Kathie Tovo,

with a clear and accessible list of potential budget cuts

other than school closings.

The **Save Zilker School Coalition**

is led by Heather Way and Amy Spiro of the Zilker PTA.

ZNA contact for Save Zilker School is ZNA president Andy Elder.

Zilker School open and thriving. If we keep Zilker a great place for kids, our entire neighborhood is better off for it. Austin is better off for it.

I know that my experience is not your experience, that my priorities are not necessarily your priorities. I understand that life holds its unique challenges that eclipse the needs of a school or neighborhood on any given day. But I encourage everyone in our neighborhood to take a moment and consider one thing: What makes Zilker your community?

If supporting excellent public schools is remotely important to you, reach out to the PTA at www.zilkerelem.org. If supporting parks, walkable neighborhoods, and sustainable development are remotely important to you, reach out to ZNA at www.zilkerneighborhood.org/. If you have any ideas for helping our community, reach out to me, Andy Elder, at waepoint@yahoo.com.



weekly events

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Zilker Neighbors Brighten the Holidays *by Barbara Cossie*

Thank you to our many Zilker neighbors who gave financial support, gift items, and gift cards to our eight sponsored families for the holidays. This year, the wonderful staff and customers at Irie Bean Coffee Bar collected four boxes of toys. By Christmas week, more than 300 presents had been wrapped and delivered to the families, and each family had received HEB and Target gift cards. Besides the gift cards, the parents received clothes and household items. The kids, of course, got toys (yea!!) and clothes (boo!!).

Thank you to our Zilker elves who wrapped and delivered the holiday gifts to our happy families: Raf Robinson (owner of Irie Bean Coffee Bar), Kaye Trybus, Bobby Rigney, Mike Meier, and Lorraine Atherton. Without the help of these folks, there would have been some sad faces on Christmas morning.

ZNA has been helping our neighbors in need for the holidays since 1997. This program, which started out with a single family, is just one of the many ways that our neighborhood shows our compassion and concern for each other. Thank you, neighbors! You are the best!

P.S. A lesson learned from this year's snow and freezes: Santa knows what he is doing when he adds socks and sweaters to those gift lists.

(Continued from page 5) businesses along the Barton Springs Road and South Lamar corridors. I ask that businesses be included in the public outreach efforts and that an economic impact analysis of any proposals be undertaken immediately."

In February, the Capital Area Progressive Democrats passed a resolution opposing "any Task Force recommendation that any neighborhood schools be closed in the name of efficiency and that we encourage the AISD school board to look for more effective ways of reducing the budget while maintaining educational excellence."

More than 100 businesses in the Zilker, South Lamar, and Barton Hills neighborhoods signed a letter to the City Council and the School Board opposing the school closures, saying: "Each of our businesses enjoy strong support from the residents of the healthy and diverse neighborhoods in which these schools are located and serve, including transfer students that frequent the area. We believe strongly that closing these schools will have a serious negative economic impact on the success of our respective businesses, many of which are independent and locally owned, by i) reducing the residential and commercial property values, ii) reducing the ability of the neighborhood to attract and retain the vibrant and diverse array of families upon which we all rely, and iii) removing the influx of business provided from the families of the many

BECOME A ZNA MEMBER TODAY

Membership is open to Zilker residents (renters or homeowners) 18 years old or older. Annual dues are \$7 per person. Additional contributions are welcome. (Many couples pay \$25.)

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Dues: _____ Contribution for ZNA general fund: _____

Please make checks payable to Zilker Neighborhood Association and mail with this form to:

ZNA Memberships, 1818 Treadwell St., Austin, TX 78704

students who are served by these schools. Any reduction in the revenues of our businesses and valuation of our respective properties, and businesses, will lead to a corresponding reduction in sales and property tax revenue collected by the City of Austin and AISD."

Take It to the Capitol

The Save Zilker Elementary Coalition, along with all the other school communities in the Save Austin Schools effort, has made the case that closing these schools will not close the AISD budget gap, and as this newsletter goes to press, it looks like most of the alternative cost savings proposed by Kathie Tovo and Susan Moffat will be incorporated into the task force recommendations. Cost savings on the maintenance of facilities, however, do not touch the real problem: the chronic underfunding of public education in Texas. It's time for the citizens of Austin to take the issue to the next level.

The Austin Neighborhoods
(Continued on page 11)

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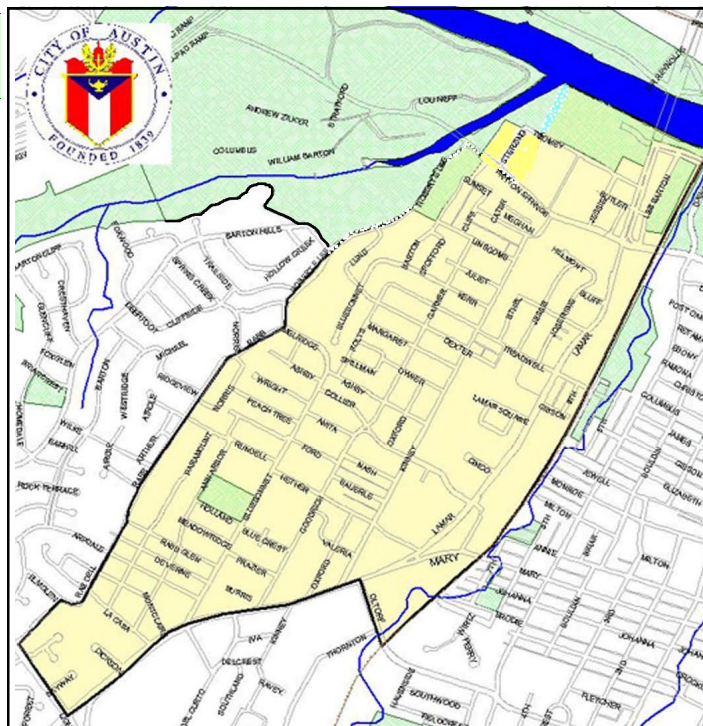
THE ZILKER NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION elected these officers for 2011 at the general meeting on October 25, 2010:

- President:* Andrew Elder
- First Vice President:* Richard Gravois
- Second Vice President:* Steven McGuire
- Secretary:* Ryan Stryker
- Treasurer:* Open
- ANC Delegate:* Open
- Z-News Editor:* Lorraine Atherton
- Social Chair:* Open

We are still in need of a treasurer, an Austin Neighborhoods Council delegate, and a social chair. To volunteer to serve in those or any other offices, call any of the executive committee members listed on the back of this newsletter, or e-mail ZilkerNA@austin.rr.com.

ZNA still needs help with the membership committee and the zoning committee. In the past, vice presidents or other elected officers have filled those posts, but you do not have to be elected to chair a committee, nor do all committee chairs have to serve on the executive committee. The following neighbors have agreed to serve on the executive committee in unelected positions:

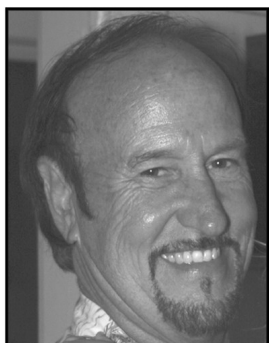
- Holiday Family Program coordinator:*
Barbara Cossie



The boundaries of ZNA include Zilker Park on the west and extend to the railroad tracks on the east. The southern boundary is Barton Skyway. The northern boundary is the lake.

- Z-News advertising coordinator:* Dave Piper
- Parks and Environment committee chair:*
Gardner Sumner
- Sound committee chair:* Bill Neale
- ACL Festival representative:* Steve McGuire
- For ZNA bylaws and other info, visit*
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(Continued from page 9) Council will soon begin circulating draft resolutions to address the AISD budget crisis and long-term solutions. Some of those resolutions call on the City of Austin to provide financial support for urban schools. Structural solutions that some neighborhoods have discussed are property tax reforms, including revisions of commercial property tax appraisals and changes to the Robin Hood school funding formula. For instance, a position statement from the Blackshear Prospect Hills neighborhood reads, "We believe that if properly assessed by TCAD, business property taxes would go a long way towards properly funding our local taxing authorities, especially AISD. It is the responsibility of AISD Trustees to demand that TCAD provide an accurate assessment of Business and Investment Property and ensure that they are paying their fair share."

The ANC draft resolution will be available at the February 28 meeting of the Zilker Neighborhood Association, at Zilker School. We hope the Save Zilker community will share its own proposals that our neighbors can examine over the next month. The goal is to find solutions that we can recommend to our elected representatives on the AISD school board, on the Austin City Council, and at the State Legislature. Please join your neighbors in this important discussion of the future of our children, our neighborhood, our school system, and our city.

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2011 Executive Committee of ZNA

Elected Officers:

President: Andy Elder, 428-9180
1st VP: Richard Gravois, 441-3430
2nd VP: Steve McGuire, 495-4259
Secretary: Ryan Stryker, 431-4245
Treasurer: Open
Social Chair: Open
ANC Delegate: Open
ZNews Editor: Lorraine Atherton, 447-7681

About the Zilker Neighborhood Association

ZNA holds general meetings the fourth or fifth Monday of February, April, July, and October, at Zilker Elementary School. The Executive Committee meets at 7 PM the first Monday of each month, usually at Artz Rib House.

Our Purpose: To improve the quality of life in the neighborhood in matters of land use, environmental protection, public services, consumer protection, preservation of the historic and unique character of the community; to provide support in other matters of neighborhood concern; and to promote and participate in the civic life of the city.

Committee Chairs:

Holiday Family Program: Barbara Cossie, 447-4437
ZNews Advertising: Dave Piper, 916-9636
Parks and Environment: Gardner Sumner, 468-6200
Sound: Bill Neale, williamneale@hotmail.com
ACL Festival: Steve McGuire

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